



San Joaquin Valley and Southern Sierra Region

WING BEAT NEWS

FEBRUARY 2004

Telephone: (209) 826-0463

<http://www.dfg.ca.gov/reg4/wingbeat/>

DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

Los Baños Wildlife Area

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"Wing Beat News" is informational only; it is not designed as a substitute for the regulation books

Los Baños Wildlife Area 75th Anniversary Special Edition

The Los Baños Wildlife Area was the first of a series of Department of Fish and Game waterfowl refuges. Originally established in 1929 as a 3,000 acre waterfowl refuge, it has grown over the past 75 years into a 17,800 acre complex of diversified wildlife habitat. Currently the Department manages 108 Wildlife Areas totaling 648,758 acres. Here is the story of the first one.

In April of 1929, the Fish and Game Commission purchased a 3,000 acre parcel for the Los Baños Waterfowl Refuge, designated as a State Game Refuge. This purchase was located within the historical flood plain of the San Joaquin River in Western Merced County, approximately four and one-half miles northeast of the town of Los Baños. This land was purchased during a period when North American waterfowl populations were very low, and bag limits were high (25 per day and 50 per week). The hunting license fee at the time was raised from one dollar to two dollars, with one-third of the funds used to purchase these State refuges.

Throughout this edition of Wingbeat News you will find articles and photos depicting the many changes that have occurred on the wildlife area in the past 75 years.

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USEFUL PAGES ON THE DFG WEBSITE

To find information about ...

General Hunting and Fishing Regulations:

http://www.dfg.ca.gov/fg_comm/regs.html

2003-04 Hunting and Other Public Uses on State and Federal Areas:

http://www.dfg.ca.gov/fg_comm/2003/statefedareas.pdf

Wing Beat News - San Joaquin Valley and Southern Sierra Region:

<http://www.dfg.ca.gov/reg4/wingbeat/>

Information about Hunting and Fishing License Fees:

<http://www.dfg.ca.gov/licensing/index.html>

Reduced-fee Fishing Licenses:

<http://www.dfg.ca.gov/licensing/fishing/sportfishingfreereduced.html>

Los Baños WLA 75th Anniversary Special: MANAGING NATURE BY CHANGING THE LANDSCAPE

From its purchase in 1929 until 1948, the purpose of the Los Baños Waterfowl Refuge was to provide habitat and sanctuary for wintering waterfowl. The topography of the refuge was much different than it is today, including many natural ponds and channels, many of them lined with willows. There were a few diversions and water controls installed to help augment the natural marsh.



Photo: Leveling and preparing a field to grow waterfowl food crops at the Los Baños Waterfowl Refuge. DFG Photo.

The 1950's was the period of the double-edged sword. As required by the Lea Act, which was intended to reduce waterfowl depredation of nearby rice crops, much of the refuge land was leveled and diked so that large blocks of waterfowl food could be grown. However, to accomplish this, most natural sloughs and ponds were filled in the process and most willow thickets were bulldozed out. Natural floodplain, slough and marsh habitats were converted to managed blocks of seasonal wetlands for the purpose of producing waterfowl food.

SPREAD THE WORD ABOUT RECEIVING WINGBEAT NEWS THROUGH EMAIL

Chances are if you're reading this newsletter you have already signed up to receive *Wingbeat News* through email. For the time being, it will not be printed and mailed to subscribers. One advantage of receiving the newsletter electronically is evident in this issue: the inclusion of photographs, which would have been too costly to include in the previously printed versions.

Please encourage anyone who may be interested in receiving *Wingbeat News* to send their request to losbanosinfo@dfg.ca.gov.

SPRING FESTIVAL AT THE LOS BANOS WILDLIFE AREA

Spring 2004 marks the 75th anniversary of the Los Banos Wildlife Area, the beginning of a legacy of wildlife management in California. Come join in a celebration of San Joaquin Valley wetlands by joining us at the Los Banos Wildlife Area for a day of outdoor fun. Mark March 13th on your calendar.

When

Saturday March 13, 2004

Who is welcome

Everyone! Admission is free. *Pre-registration is required for tours**

What to expect

- The Grasslands Regional Duck Calling Contest and novice, junior, and team competitions
- Tours of the Los Banos Wildlife Area*

Where

Los Banos Wildlife Area
18110 Henry Miller Rd, Los Banos, CA 93635

***Tour Registration**

Tour 1: Bird Ecology and Identification – Discover the diverse assortment of migratory and resident birds that make the wildlife area their home. 8 a.m. – 10 a.m.

Tour 2: Marsh Management – Learn about the network of man-made canals that support the habitat, and compensate for the loss of natural flood cycles. 2 p.m. – 4 p.m.

Each tour will have a limited capacity. Tour space will be awarded to those people pre-registered on a first come, first served basis. Pre-register by sending an email to losbanosinfo@dfg.ca.gov or telephone (209) 704-4772 and indicate which tour you would like to attend and number of people.

KIDS LEARN ABOUT WETLANDS AT GEECe

Children are tomorrow's decision makers. In the not too distant future they will be making important choices concerning the environment, and specifically our local grasslands and wetlands in the San Joaquin Valley. What better way to educate kids about the value of wetlands than with a visit to the Grassland Environmental Education Center (GEECe)? GEECe is a field trip facility that was established in 1995 as an opportunity for elementary school students to learn about the ecologically significant ecosystems located in the San Joaquin Valley. Through a visit to GEECe, children learn about the ecology of the Valley's freshwater marshes and the shared roles of sportsmen, the farming community, and wildlife managers as wetland stewards.

A typical visit to GEECe includes an opening discussion about wetland ecology, including the history of the local grasslands and wetlands, the plants and animals found in wetlands, and why wetland conservation is an important matter that directly affects everyone. The students then divide into groups for California curriculum standards-based activity stations consisting of owl pellet dissection, pond water analysis, reading and writing, and wetland arts and crafts. After lunch the group goes outdoors to participate in more action-packed and educational activity stations on the shore of the seasonal and permanent ponds located adjacent to the education center.

Thousands of children have visited GEECe since its opening. This is often the first instance a child gets to experience an activity of this nature. From this initial visit may develop a lifetime of curiosity and interest for the environment and protecting our natural resources. GEECe is open for tours by reservation only from November through May to school classes, youth groups such as Boy and Girl Scouts, as well as interested adult groups. GEECe is made possible by a partnership between Grassland Water District and the CA Department of Fish and Game along with grants and donations. For more information or to schedule a field trip, contact Jack Sparks at (209) 704-4772.

HUNTER SAFETY CLASSES

Now is the time to locate a hunter safety class for you, a friend, or a youth who is interested in hunting. Call the Los Baños WA at (209) 826-0463 for information about classes near Los Baños, or call your DFG Regional Office and request information for your area. Don't wait until the last minute to find a class near you!

WILD ON WETLANDS FESTIVAL ON SABBATICAL LEAVE IN 2004 WITH HOPE TO BE BACK IN 2005

The sponsoring agencies and organizations of the Wild on Wetlands (WOW) festival have had to tighten their budgets due to the State's budgetary shortfalls. As a result, after six very successful annual festivals, the WOW steering committee has decided to postpone the seventh WOW festival until March 2005. The committee will use the next year to aggressively pursue funds for spring 2005. The decision was made to place the festival on sabbatical leave rather than go forward with very limited funding for a lesser festival in 2004.

The festival has been extremely successful in the past, attracting visitors from throughout California. The festival's mission is to create awareness and appreciation of the 180,000 acres of wetlands and other wildlife habitats that comprise the Grasslands.

Additionally, the festival sets out to promote ecotourism in the Grasslands and the benefits that tourists bring to the local economy. The event features fun and exciting wetland fieldtrips, workshops, family and youth activities, educational displays, arts and crafts vendors, great food, and duck calling contests. For more information, contact Grassland Water District at (209) 826-5188 or the Los Baños Wildlife Area at (209) 826-0463.

DON'T FORGET TO APPLY FOR BIG GAME TAGS TO MEET THE DRAWING DEADLINE

Do you plan to apply for antelope, elk, bighorn sheep or deer tags this year? The deadline for applying has not yet been set; however, be sure to check the DFG website after mid-March.

Due to budget cuts, pamphlets may not be printed as in years past; however, information previously contained in pamphlets will be available on the Department's website at <http://www.dfg.ca.gov>. Information about applications for antelope, deer, elk and bighorn sheep drawings may be obtained from the DFG website and through license agents. To locate a license agent near your home or for more information call (916)227-2255 or (916)227-2253.

LEARN ABOUT WILDLIFE AND WETLANDS THROUGH A GUIDED TOUR

For many years, school classes, youth groups, and adult groups have participated in guided tours of the wildlife areas in the Los Baños Complex and only learned not only how exciting wildlife can be, but how Department wildlife areas can be used as an extension of the school classroom. The tours may center on a wide diversity of specific topics such as bird identification, habitat management, water manipulation, and plant identification. Programs are tailored for each group with consideration given to grade level and state curriculum standards. The free tours are available throughout the year, but prior arrangements must be made. Reservations can be made by calling Jack Sparks at (209) 704-4772.

***Los Baños WLA 75th Anniversary Special:* FINDING THE RIGHT BALANCE**

The Los Baños Waterfowl Refuge operated as a refuge for wintering waterfowl from 1929 through 1949. In 1948 an agreement between the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the California Division of Fish and Game under the Pittman-Robertson and Lea Acts, established a new direction for the area. The new mission of the Los Baños Waterfowl Refuge established by this agreement was to: 1) provide suitable habitat for wintering waterfowl populations; 2) minimize depredation on farm

crops by waterfowl by providing food and resting areas; and 3) provide for public waterfowl hunting.

The original management plan set up under the Federal Aid Program (Project W 40D-1) identified 41 management cells, or distinct fields. Most of these were leveled and planted with watergrass. The plantings were rotated every three years so that the fields would contain a mixture of fallow areas, volunteer crops, and newly planted areas. Some fields were irrigated early to provide feeding areas for ducks arriving at the end of July, and other fields were managed to produce feed for fall and winter.

For the first time since its purchase in 1929, the refuge was opened to waterfowl hunting on November 1, 1953. During that season 1,736 hunters took 2,729 ducks, 197 geese, and 144 coots for an average of 1.77 birds per hunter. The area was open to junior pheasant hunting for nine days. Pheasants from the Los Baños State Game Farm were released for the junior hunters. The total number of pheasants released was not recorded; however, 215 junior hunters took 80 rooster pheasants, three of which were birds from the state game farm, as indicated by leg bands. The junior pheasant hunts are now held at the O'Neill Forebay Wildlife Area and are supported by several sportsmen's organizations that provide the birds for the hunts as well as other support.

Management of the area changed direction in the 1970's. Waterfowl populations had stabilized in western North America, and improved agricultural practices reduced crop damage from waterfowl. The watergrass planting program adopted in 1948 was modified and water manipulation was used to create a more diverse habitat containing a variety of plants. In 1987, the habitat management focus expanded into planting pasture and grain crops for sandhill cranes as well as geese, dove, and pheasants on newly acquired land. Current management includes restoration to re-establish some of the willow riparian habitat lost in the past.

DEER AND PIG HUNTING OPPORTUNITIES ON WESTERN MERCED COUNTY WILDLIFE AREAS

Deer and wild pig hunting on wildlife areas in western Merced County will be available during the Zone A deer season to hunters with the proper tags and a valid license. If available, please read the "Hunting and Other Public Uses on State and Federal Lands" pamphlet for complete and specific information. Due to budget cuts, pamphlets may not be printed as in years past; however, information previously contained in pamphlets will be available on the Department's website at <http://www.dfg.ca.gov>

Upper Cottonwood Creek Wildlife Area (4,000 acres): Rifles and pistols, legal for the taking of big game are

allowed on Upper Cottonwood Creek Wildlife Area (UCCWA) for hunting deer and/or wild pig.

To prevent overcrowding, the number of persons hunting deer or wild pig on UCCWA during the opening weekend of the Zone A general rifle season (second Saturday and Sunday in August), will be limited to 50 persons. Permits will be available through a computerized drawing to be held at the Los Baños Wildlife Area at 10:00 a.m. on Wednesday, July 7, 2004. The public is welcome to attend the drawing.

To apply for the drawing include the following information on a postcard only: ① hunter's name, ② complete mailing address, ③ telephone number, and ④ 2002-2003 hunting license number. Up to four persons may apply as a group if all of the information for each hunter is listed on one postcard. A person's name may appear in the drawing only once. There is no cost for the drawing or permit. Mail postcard applications to: Deer Drawing, Los Baños Complex, 18110 W. Henry Miller Avenue, Los Baños, CA 93635. Cards must arrive prior to 10:00 a.m. on Wednesday, July 7, 2004. Successful applicants will be notified by mail. Call (209) 826-0463 for additional information.

Wild pig hunting opportunities on UCCWA opens with the Zone A deer season with either bow and arrow, rifle, or pistol, depending on the season. Wild pigs may be taken from the opening of Zone A deer season through the last Sunday in January. However, the opening weekend of general (rifle) season is restricted to persons holding a permit issued through a drawing to be held on July 7. For persons who desire to hunt wild pig with rifles or pistols legal for the taking of big game the remainder of the season, the area is open from the Monday after the opening of the general Zone A deer season through the last Sunday in January.

Lower Cottonwood Creek Wildlife Area (2,000 acres): On Lower Cottonwood Creek Wildlife Area (LCCWA) hunters are restricted to shotguns with slugs, 12 gauge or smaller, or bow and arrow.

On LCCWA, wild pig hunting opportunities will be the same as on UCCWA with two exceptions: 1) only shotgun with slugs, 12 gauge or smaller, or bow and arrow may be used and 2) there is no drawing restriction for opening weekend of the general Zone A deer season. No rifles or pistols are allowed on the LCCWA.

San Luis Reservoir Wildlife Area (900 acres): On San Luis Reservoir Wildlife Area (SLRWA) hunters are restricted to shotguns with slugs, 12 gauge or smaller, or bow and arrow.

Pig hunting is available on SLRWA throughout the year; however the number of pigs taken in the past has been low. Method of take is restricted to shotgun with slugs, 12 gauge or smaller, or bow and arrow.

Little Panoche Reservoir Wildlife Area (780 acres): Pig hunting is available on Little Panoche Reservoir Wildlife Area throughout the year; however as with SLRWA, the number of pigs taken in the past has been low. Method of take is restricted to shotgun with slugs, 12 gauge or smaller, or bow and arrow.

WOOD DUCK FIELD DAY

Have you ever thought about how you can help to conserve wildlife here in California? Here is a great opportunity to learn how you can get involved in a great ongoing conservation effort which benefits wildlife throughout the state. The California Wood Duck Program (CWDP) will be hosting two wood duck training days this spring. These training sessions are great opportunities for anyone interested in learning more about wood ducks and how to properly manage for them. The sessions will include an educational slide show, scenarios one might encounter while checking boxes, instruction on keeping accurate nesting records, hands on box monitoring instruction, and more. The first field day will be held at Gray Lodge Wildlife Area on Saturday, March 6, 2004, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. The second session will be held at the Cosumnes River Preserve on Saturday, April 3, from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. These sessions are free, so bring the family and a lunch and enjoy a day of learning more about wood ducks.

The California Wood Duck Program was initiated in 1991 to provide an educational forum to promote preservation and enhancement of forested wetlands as well as to increase California's local wood duck population through the installation and monitoring of wood duck nest boxes. Since 1991, more than 300,000 wood duck ducklings have hatched from boxes enrolled in the CWDP. The CWDP is a cooperative program of California Waterfowl Association, California Department of Fish and Game, and University of California at Davis.

For more information regarding the wood duck field days or the California Wood Duck Program contact CWA Biologist Jeremy Kwolek at (916) 648-1406 or jeremy_kwolek@calwaterfowl.org.

Los Baños WLA 75th Anniversary Special: **GROWING LARGER AND CHANGING NAMES**

In 1952 the first expansion of the Los Baños complex was made when the Department of Fish and Game leased the 3,000 acre San Luis Wasteway Holding Reservoir from the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation to operate as a public waterfowl hunting area. The reservoir was located near the small town of Volta, approximately six miles northwest of Los Baños. The area was named the San Luis Wasteway Public Hunting Area. In 1972, the name was changed to the Volta

Wildlife Area. This was the first step toward today's Los Baños Wildlife Area Complex, which consists of 17,800 acres at 8 different sites.



Photo: Engine driven pump used to flood the San Luis Wasteway Public Hunting Area, 1952. The truck's position in the photo is now the entrance to Parking Lot 1 at Volta Wildlife Area. Photo by Roger Wilbur.

In 1955, to better portray the new management direction and to reflect its new mission, the name of the Los Baños Waterfowl Refuge was changed to the Los Baños Waterfowl Management Area.

In 1965 an additional 208 acres adjacent to the existing Los Baños Waterfowl Management Area was purchased by the Wildlife Conservation Board.

In response to changes in management and goals by the Department, Waterfowl Management Areas had their names changed to Wildlife Areas in 1968.

As mitigation for wildlife habitat lost with the construction of the California Aqueduct, San Luis Reservoir and its facilities, three new wildlife areas were added to the complex in 1973. These lands were not deeded to the Department of Fish and Game; however, the management of these areas to benefit wildlife was turned over to DFG under a contract with the Department of Water Resources, which jointly administered the land with the Bureau of Reclamation. These lands included the 750 acre O'Neill Forebay Wildlife Area, managed as riparian area; and the 850 acre San Luis Reservoir Wildlife Area, which supports oak savannah and oak woodland. Both of these areas are located near the San Luis Reservoir in western Merced County. The 700 acre Little Panoche Reservoir Wildlife Area in Fresno County, provides riparian and salt bush scrub habitat along Little Panoche Creek.

Another addition to the Los Baños Wildlife Area Complex occurred in 1978 when the Department of Fish and Game purchased the 6,000 acre Cottonwood Creek

Wildlife Area north of Highway 152 in the inner Coast Range in Merced County.

In 1987 the Wildlife Conservation Board purchased an additional 2,478 acres in three parcels adjacent to the north boundary of the Los Baños Wildlife Area.

The last expansions included several purchases between 1995 and 2000 that make up the Mud Slough Unit, a 625 acre wetland/upland area approximately five miles southeast of the Los Baños Wildlife Area. Currently, Wildlife Conservation Board staff is working to acquire an additional 753 acres of restored wetlands adjacent to the Volta Wildlife Area. This property will improve the Department's ability to work with its partners to improve overall waterfowl distribution in the area.

START CHASING COTTONTAILS ON JULY 1

Cottontail rabbit hunting will open on July 1 to hunters with valid hunting licenses. Shoot times are from one-half hour before sunrise to one-half hour after sunset. See specific regulations for hunting on wildlife areas at the Department's website. Cottontail populations fluctuate from year to year as they are highly dependent upon grass and forb production.

The Mendota, Los Baños, Volta, North Grasslands (Gadwall, Salt Slough, and China Island Units), Little Panoche Reservoir, and O'Neill Forebay Wildlife Areas are traditionally very popular locations to hunt rabbits. Remember, only shotguns, 12 gauge or smaller, can be used on State wildlife areas for hunting rabbits.

***Los Baños WLA 75th Anniversary Special:* THE FIRST EMPLOYEES**

Little is known about the men that worked the Los Baños Waterfowl Refuge in the early days. Only first or last names were used in refuge journals. Most were probably visiting temporary help or wardens—"Dollar a Year Men" as they were commonly called. There was a bunkhouse and a cook shed where workers could stay. This bunk house complex was used as an airplane spotting station during World War II.

Roy M. Wattenbarger was the first refuge manager, serving from July 1, 1930 until 1969. Lawrence Cloyd was assigned to the refuge on September 15, 1930 and worked with Wattenbarger until July 1933 when he became manager of the Gray Lodge Refuge in the Sacramento Valley. In later years Cloyd returned as Regional Manager for Region 4, headquartered in Fresno (now called the San Joaquin Valley – Southern Sierra Region), and finally Deputy Director of the Department (when there was only *one* Deputy Director), which would be the last position held before he retired. His story, including a bit about the Los Baños Waterfowl

Refuge is in the January-February 1999 edition of *Outdoor California*.

Joseph H. Nunes came to work in 1936 from the Highway Department as a Conservation Aid. During World War II, Nunes went to work in the shipyards, leaving Roy Wattenbarger to run the refuge alone, as only one person was exempted from war work to maintain the refuge. After the war Nunes returned to the refuge and worked as head Tractor Operator-Laborer until he retired in 1970. In 1951 Nick Ermacoff, the Manager of the former Madeline Plains WMA (property that is now under private ownership) located near Alturas in Northeastern California, moved to Los Baños and used the assistance of Los Baños staff to install blinds at the newly established Merced National Wildlife Refuge and set up the hunt program there. He also managed the Los Baños Waterfowl Management Area for several months while Wattenbarger was in the hospital. Ermacoff later became the first manager of the Mendota Wildlife Area.



Photo: Original San Luis Wasteway Public Hunting Area check station crew 1952, left to right, Roger Wilbur, seasonal aid and continues to serve as assistant manager; Harry Smoke, game conservation aid, became assistant manager; Ned Dollahite, seasonal aid, became patrol inspector for Region 1; Jim Hennigan, seasonal aid; and Don Grider, game conservation aid, became assistant manager at the Grizzly Island Wildlife Area. DFG photo.

Worthy of mention is another significant employee, Roger O. Wilbur, who began working with the Division of Fish and Game on July 27, 1952 and came to work at the Los Baños Waterfowl Refuge on October 1, 1952. He continues to serve as Assistant Manager of the Los Baños Wildlife Area Complex today.

WELCOME SPRING TO PACHECO STATE PARK

Help welcome spring to the foothills on a moderate morning hike at Pacheco State Park with Naturalist

Jennifer Morgan to view the 2004 wildflower display. The park's sturdy wind-sculpted oaks and hillsides will be covered with fresh greens, and the group will also be watching for soaring birds as they enjoy vistas of the San Luis Reservoir.

After the moderate hike, you'll return to the picnic area and those who wish to may stay for lunch (please provide your own sack lunch). Be sure to bring waterproof hiking footwear, layered clothing and hat, sun screen, water, and an optional sack lunch. (Also optional: rain gear, binoculars, camera, and field guides.) Note: the park entrance fee is \$6 per car. Meet in the Pacheco State Park Parking Area at 10 AM.

The hikes will take place on weekends in April except Easter Sunday.

Pacheco State Park is located 24 miles west of Los Baños and 20 miles east of Gilroy on Dinosaur Point Road off of Highway 152. The park is located along the scenic, historic Pacheco Pass. For more information please call (209) 826-1196 (or 826-1197).

EXPLORE THE POPULAR "PATH OF THE PADRES" WITH CALIFORNIA STATE PARKS

The staff at San Luis Reservoir State Recreation Area will again be leading the popular "Path of the Padres" hikes on most Saturdays and Sundays starting March 6th and continuing until April 25th. These hikes are open to the public, ages 6 years and older, by advance reservation only. School group hikes may be arranged for Thursdays or Fridays. School group reservations opened December 1st but there are still many dates available.

The hike begins at the Los Baños Creek Reservoir boat launch ramp at 8:00 A.M. and returns to the ramp about 3:30 P.M. A pontoon boat carries passengers for about 30 to 40 minutes to the west end of the reservoir. Along the way, short stops are made so the hikers can observe wildlife along the shoreline.

The group disembarks at the west end of the reservoir for a five mile round-trip hike. Here they see the area where, in the early 1800's, the Spanish padres from Mission San Juan Bautista camped on their way to the Central Valley. This hike is moderately strenuous and will take about 5 hours.

Participants must be in fairly good physical condition. Because Los Baños Creek is crossed several times during the hike, footwear will get wet. Layered clothing and sturdy footwear should be a priority. Hikers must carry their own lunch and a minimum of 2 quarts of water. The hike traverses country that can be very hot and dry, depending on weather conditions, so a hat and/or sunscreen are highly recommended.

Throughout the hike, the natural and historic features of the area are observed and discussed by the hike leader. The lunch stop is near the historic "baths," deep pools in the creek carved in bedrock, which gave Los Baños its name. As early as 1805 the mission padres and accompanying soldiers washed and rested here at Los Baños del Padre Arroyo, now simply Los Baños Creek.

Participants have the option of taking a side trip up a steep hill for a spectacular view of the Menjoulet Canyon and the proposed site of the Los Baños Grandes reservoir. The canyon floor is covered with 576 acres of old-growth Sycamore forest, described by Department of Fish & Game biologists as the largest and most intact natural community of its kind left in California. Binoculars add greatly to enjoyment of the scene, and may help hikers spot the falcons and eagles that are often seen in the area.

Reservations are required for this exciting series of hikes and they will be accepted at the park office starting on February 2, 2004. To make a reservation, call (209) 826-1196 Monday through Friday from 8:30 A.M. until 5:00 P.M. A non-refundable reservation fee of \$5.00 per person is required to confirm the telephone reservations. Space is limited: please book early. On the day of the hike, an additional day use parking fee of \$6.00 per car is charged upon entry. For more information please call (209) 826-1196 (or 826-1197).

VARIOUS TYPES OF LICENSES AVAILABLE FOR SOME RESIDENTS AT LOWER COST

Some people are under the impression that senior citizens do not need a fishing license. Actually, any person over the age of 16 is required to carry a fishing license while fishing. However, there are reduced fee and free fishing licenses available if you meet certain criteria.

Contact the DFG's License and Revenue Branch at (916) 227-2245 or visit the DFG's website at <http://www.dfg.ca.gov> to see if you qualify.

FREE FISHING DAY SET FOR 2004

This year's Free Fishing Days will be June 12 and September 25, 2004. On Free Fishing Days, licenses and stamps are not needed to fish anywhere in California. Anglers still must comply with methods of take, bag and size limits, and other regulations. Free Fishing Days are a great way to introduce family members and friends to fishing. So take someone fishing on these days and introduce them to a wonderful and relaxing sport.

Los Baños WLA 75th Anniversary Special: LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

What will the next seventy-five years bring for the Los Baños Wildlife Area? Whether it's because more people live in urban areas nowadays, or for other reasons, the public seems to spend less time on recreational activities that focus on wildlife and the outdoors, such as hunting, fishing, and bird watching, than on other recreation. Each year public use on State wildlife areas declines and with it the needed revenue to support wildlife habitat. Presently, as in years past, the majority of funding for wildlife areas comes from the "traditional" users, who focus on hunting and fishing. These users not only pay entrance fees, but buy licenses and special stamps, pay additional federal taxes on sporting equipment, and donate money to conservation organizations. These funds continue to provide significant funding to Department wildlife areas through the Pittman-Roberson program, and other programs. As costs to manage wildlife areas increase combined with responsibility to manage additional acres, this funding source has declined. Clearly, one challenge the future holds is to find other sources of funding for these lands, and the multiple public use and conservation purposes they serve.

Another challenge is to maintain the broad multi-species and science-based management that has developed over the years. In the past, habitat management on wildlife areas favored species that were hunted or fished. This was because virtually all funding to operate wildlife areas came from license sales, and later taxes on hunting equipment; it did not come from general tax money or from visitors whose interest in the outdoors was other than hunting or fishing. Non-game species were generally not well documented. Wildlife Area managers made decisions based on their personal knowledge of the land, as opposed to a more formal adaptive management or ecological function approach, and were often fairly traditional. The Los Baños Wildlife Area has led a shift toward broader, science-based adaptive management. As part of this, we developed a resource assessment program with a biological staff in recent years. The biological staff has done and continues to do necessary work to assess the habitats and species present on the wildlife area complex. This provides essential information for management, as well as information on the biology of many species of animals and plants, including game and non-game species. This staff is monitoring passerine, wading bird, shorebird, and raptor use of the areas; building a Geographic Information System database of critical habitats and species; investigating the distribution and ecology of Threatened and Endangered species; and continually updating general flora and fauna inventories. We also monitor water quality, the spread of invasive exotic plants, and conduct applied research projects to. What do we now know is on the area? Over 250 species or

subspecies of birds, including at least 10 species that are considered sensitive; 33 species of mammals; 19 reptiles and amphibians, including one threatened and at least three species of special concern; and over 330 species of plants, including one endangered and at least three sensitive. The Los Baños Wildlife Area is considered an internationally important area for migrating shorebirds and an important corridor for migrating neo-tropical passerines.

If information on the ecological importance of the Wildlife Area can convince California's citizens and politicians that wildlife areas are important to wildlife and need to continue; if people use and enjoy the Area; and if we can provide financial support, then the Los Baños Wildlife Area will be around for the next seventy-five years.



Photo above: The original buildings on the Los Baños Waterfowl Refuge were a cook house and a bunk house, shown here circa 1932. These buildings were later pushed together to become the refuge's check station. They also served as an airplane spotting station during World War II. Photo by Charles Sawyer.



Photo above: The current headquarters of the Los Baños Complex that also serves as the Los Baños Wildlife Area check station. DFG Photo.

**WATERFOWL AND PHEASANT HUNTING RESULTS SUMMARY
SAN JOAQUIN VALLEY PUBLIC HUNTING AREAS**

Season	Area	Total Hunters	Total Ducks	Avg Ducks	Total Geese	Total Waterfowl	Average Waterfowl	Total Pheasants
2003-2004	Los Banos WLA	4552	6907	1.52	115	7022	1.54	71
	Volta WLA	1708	2762	1.62	19	2781	1.63	11
	Kesterson NWR	2626	3331	1.27	36	3367	1.28	1
	Merced NWR	850	2188	2.57	141	2329	2.74	n/a
	North Freitas NWR	723	1478	2.04	6	1484	2.05	n/a
	Salt Slough WLA	1854	2626	1.42	6	2632	1.42	103
	San Luis NWR	4502	8683	1.93	55	8738	1.94	58
	China Island WLA	1129	1112	0.98	26	1138	1.01	204*
	Gadwall WLA	798	1843	2.31	12	1855	2.32	6
	West Bear Creek NWR	847	1467	1.73	14	1481	1.75	n/a
	South Freitas NWR	829	1461	1.76	18	1479	1.78	n/a
	Mendota WLA	11037	19548	1.77	429	19977	1.81	166
	Kern NWR	2963	8113	2.74	17	8166	2.76	n/a
Totals		34418	61519		894	62449		620
2002-2003	Los Banos WLA	3665	4877	1.33	115	4992	1.36	211*
	Volta WLA	1658	2780	1.68	6	2786	1.68	16
	Kesterson NWR	2526	3998	1.58	57	4055	1.61	20
	Merced NWR	651	1355	2.08	158	1513	2.32	n/a
	North Freitas NWR	701	1463	2.09	10	1473	2.10	n/a
	Salt Slough WLA	1567	2205	1.41	16	2221	1.42	53
	San Luis NWR	3856	7450	1.93	36	7486	1.94	25
	China Island WLA	787	1233	1.57	33	1266	1.61	124*
	Gadwall WLA	482	895	1.86	8	903	1.87	0
	West Bear Creek NWR	755	1508	2.00	27	1535	2.03	n/a
	South Freitas NWR	829	1565	1.89	12	1577	1.90	n/a
	Mendota WLA	10457	16965	1.62	664	17629	1.69	
	Kern NWR	2893	6983	2.41	17	7000	2.42	n/a
Totals		30827	53277		1159	54436		449
2001-2002	Los Banos WLA	4427	4612	1.04	98	4710	1.06	
	Volta WLA	1688	2514	1.49	7	2521	1.49	
	Kesterson NWR	2552	4609	1.81	23	4632	1.82	
	Merced NWR	790	1825	2.31	133	1958	2.48	
	North Freitas NWR	668	1864	2.79	4	1868	2.80	
	Salt Slough WLA	1815	2290	1.26	13	2303	1.27	
	San Luis NWR	4349	9440	2.17	33	9473	2.18	
	China Island WLA	499	927	1.86	17	944	1.89	
	Gadwall WLA	529	898	1.70	11	909	1.72	
	West Bear Creek NWR	808	1662	2.06	22	1684	2.08	
	South Freitas NWR	837	2177	2.60	9	2186	2.61	
	Mendota WLA	11223	20961	1.87	596	21557	1.92	
	Kern NWR	2706	6328	2.34	12	6340	2.34	
Totals		32891	60107		978	61085		

*pheasants released on area

The following information was copied from the Department of Fish and Game's Game Bird Heritage Program press releases.

TWO SPRING WILD TURKEY HUNTS

The Department of Fish and Game, (Department) through its Game Bird Heritage Program, the Tejon Ranch and the Millerton Lake State Recreation Area are offering **free** spring wild turkey hunts. Providing hunter opportunity and hunter access are major goals of the Game Bird Heritage Program.

Tejon Ranch Hunt

Tejon Ranch is located south of Bakersfield in the Tehachapi Mountains. **Ten free guided hunts are scheduled for Juniors ONLY, four hunters on April 10, four hunters on April 17 and two hunters April 18, 2004.** The Department in cooperation with Tejon Ranch released the Merriam's subspecies of wild turkey on the Tejon Ranch in 1989. They have adapted well to the habitat, and large flocks now populate the ranch.

Millerton Lake State Recreation Area Hunt

The Millerton Lake State Recreation Area Hunt is located on the Fresno County side of Millerton Lake. **This hunt is not recommended for the novice or inexperienced hunter.** Hunting wild turkeys with archery equipment is considered extremely difficult, even by experienced archery turkey hunters. There are six **archery only** hunts. The first hunt is scheduled for opening weekend, March 27-28, 2004 and is a two-day hunt only. Hunters drawn for this hunt will be allowed to scout one week prior (March 20-26, 2004). The remaining hunts are one-week long and are scheduled for March 29-April 4, April 5-11, April 12-18, April 19-25 and April 26-May 2, 2004. Hunters under 18 years of age must be accompanied by an adult (18 years of age or older).

All hunters selected for this hunt will be required to attend a **mandatory** safety and orientation meeting on Saturday, March 20, 2004, at 9:00 a.m., at the Millerton Lake District Office. A special limit of one bearded turkey per hunter will be in effect during this special hunt. The hunting area has both walk-in and boat-in access. Hunters will be required to pay a \$5.00 State Parks and Recreation Area entrance fee per day (waived in lieu of a \$67.00 annual State Parks pass).

How to Apply

Hunters will be selected by a random computerized drawing and allowed to bring one guest to participate in these special hunts. When applying for the hunts, provide the following information for **yourself and your guest**: ① name, ② address, ③ daytime and evening telephone numbers, ④ 2003-2004 hunting license number and ⑤ hunt location (e.g., "Tejon"), and date in order of preference. Hunters may apply only **once** for each hunt area and date. Applying for the same hunt or date more than once will disqualify you from the drawing. Applications must be mailed to:

Game Bird Heritage Program Turkey Hunts
Department of Fish and Game
1234 East Shaw Avenue
Fresno, California 93710

Applications must be **received** by Friday, March 5, 2004, at 5:00 p.m. to be eligible for the drawing. Only successful applicants will be notified. For additional information about the hunts, contact the Department of Fish and Game, Game Bird Heritage Program at (559) 243-4005, extension 132 or 133. The Game Bird Heritage Program, Tejon Ranch and Millerton Lake State Parks and Recreation Area are pleased to offer these special hunts to the public.

Application for San Joaquin Valley and Southern Sierra Region 2004 Tejon Ranch and Millerton Lake Spring Wild Turkey Hunts

Please Print Clearly

All areas must be completed (including guest information, if bringing guest).
Incomplete Applications Will Be Rejected

Name

Last M. I.

First (Mr., Mrs., Jr, etc.)

Hunting License Number

H - ☐ Check here if Junior hunter

Address

☐ Check here if lifetime license

Street

City State Zip Code

Telephone

Daytime - - Extension

Evening - -

Guest Name (Hunter Only)

Last M. I.

First (Mr., Mrs., Jr, etc.)

Hunting License Number

H - ☐ Check here if Junior hunter

Address

☐ Check here if lifetime license

Street

City State Zip Code

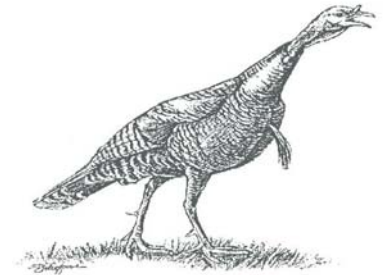
Telephone

Daytime - - Extension

Evening - -

Return this application to:

Game Bird Heritage Program Turkey Hunts
Department of Fish and Game
1234 East Shaw Avenue
Fresno, California 93710



Selection Instructions:

Hunters may only apply once, either as an applicant or as a guest for each hunt. Select your hunts in order of preference, beginning with your first choice, by entering the corresponding hunt letter in box "1" as your first choice. An application may include up to nine hunts. However, you and your guest will only be selected for one hunt.

1	2	3	4	5	6
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
7	8	9			
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>			

- A Tejon Ranch, April 10 (Juniors only)
- B Tejon Ranch, April 17 (Juniors only)
- C Tejon Ranch, April 18 (Juniors only)
- D Millerton Lake, March 27-28 (Archery only)
- E Millerton Lake, March 29-April 4 (Archery only)
- F Millerton Lake, April 5-11 (Archery only)
- G Millerton Lake, April 12-18 (Archery only)
- H Millerton Lake, April 19-25 (Archery only)
- I Millerton Lake, April 26-May 2 (Archery only)



Additional copies of this application can be found at <http://www.dfg.ca.gov>.

Or fax:
(559) 243-4022

REGIONAL OFFICE ADDRESSES AND TELEPHONE NUMBERS

To obtain information regarding the various areas or DFG programs, call the Regional Office near the area you want to visit. Listed below are the phone numbers for the Regional Offices. Please note that several area codes have been changed.

Northern CA & North Coast Region
601 Locust, Redding CA 96001
(530) 225-2300

Sacramento Valley & Central Sierra Region
1701 Nimbus Road, Rancho Cordova CA 95670
(916) 358-2900

Central Coast Region
7329 Silverado Trail, (P. O. Box 47)
Yountville CA 94599
(707) 944-5500

San Joaquin Valley & Southern Sierra Region
1234 E. Shaw Avenue, Fresno CA 93710
(559) 243-4005

South Coast Region
4949 View Ridge Ave., San Diego CA 92123
(858) 467-4201

Eastern Sierra & Inland Deserts Region
4775 Bird Farm Road, Chino Hills CA 91709
(909) 597-9823

Marine Region
20 Lower Ragsdale Dr. #100, Monterey CA 93940
(831) 649-2870

Other Department of Fish and Game Offices:

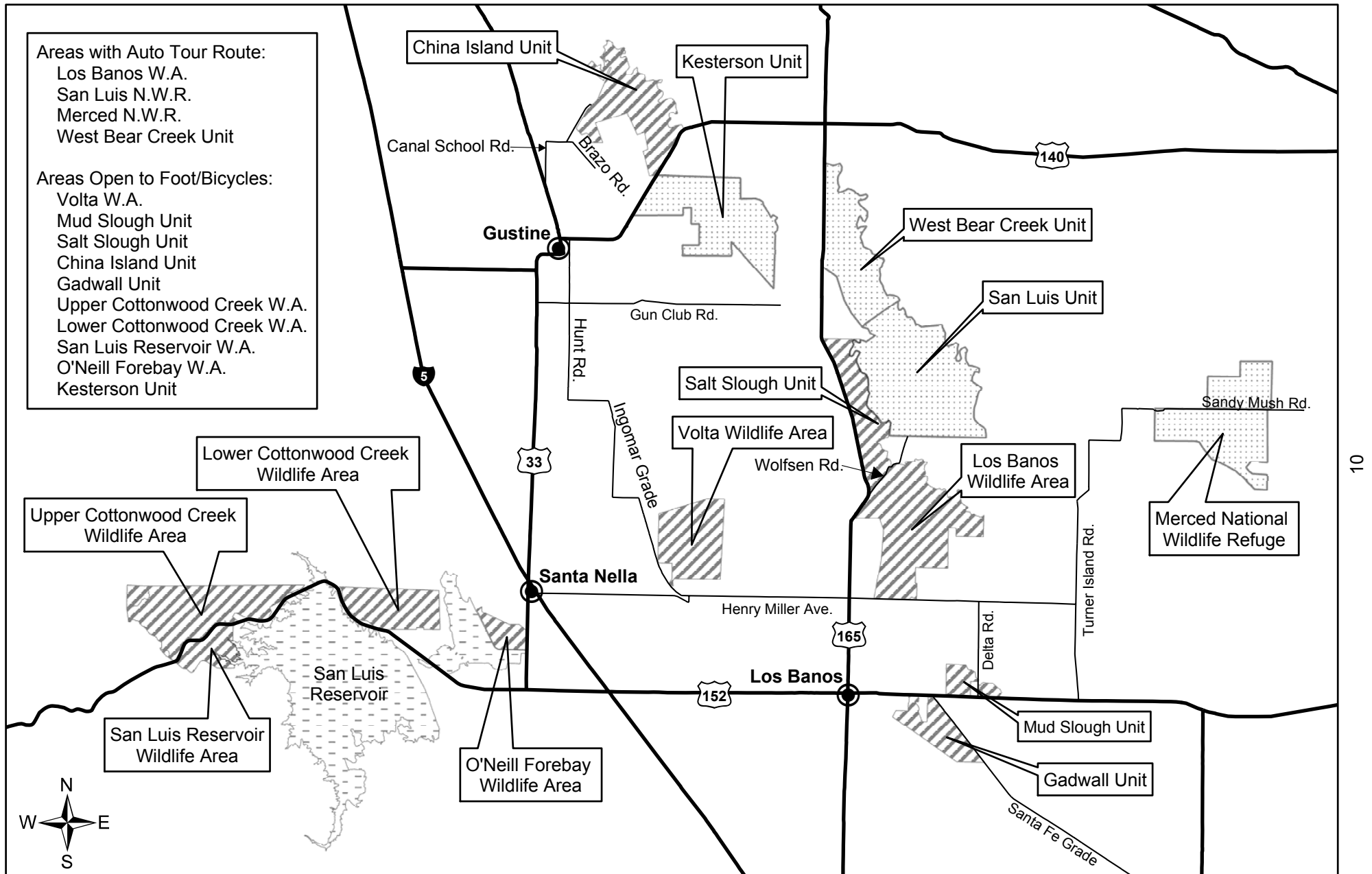
Fish & Game Headquarters, Sacramento
(916) 653-7664

License & Revenue Branch
3211 S Street, Sacramento 95816
(916) 227-2245

The San Joaquin Valley and Southern Sierra Region Wing Beat News newsletter is edited by Jack Sparks (losbanosinfo@dfg.ca.gov).

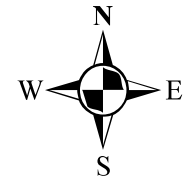
Alternate communication format is available upon request. If reasonable accommodation is needed, call Jack Sparks at (209) 704-4772 or the California Relay (Telephone) Service for the deaf or hearing-impaired from TDD phones at 1-800-735-2929 or 711.

Northern San Joaquin Valley Wildlife Viewing Opportunities



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Western San Joaquin Valley Wildlife Viewing Opportunities



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